Adult Learning Centres

Policy Handbook

2001–2002

Manitoba
Education,
Training
and Youth

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OVERVIEW

This document is intended to lay the groundwork for an emerging and enabling policy on adult learning. The policy seeks to encourage flexible, adaptive programming that promotes continuous self-confident learning and allows learners to move as quickly and effectively as possible toward desired personal and community outcomes.

The policy on adult learning builds on the input offered by representatives of school divisions, adult learning centres, literacy programs, post-secondary institutions, and educational associations during the consultation sessions that occurred in the fall of 2000. The consultation process focused on three key policy points.

- The definition and by implication the mandate of an adult learning centre
- A format for cost-effective, flexible and sustainable funding
- Approaches to accountability for improvement

Feedback from the consultation sessions and the written submissions indicated that adult learning centres offer a variety of programs and services that promote and respond to the lifelong learning needs of the individuals and communities they serve. These programs and services included, but were not restricted to:

- life skills
- literacy, that is, reading, writing and numeracy skills
- academic preparation, upgrading and high school completion, including a mature student diploma
- pre-employment and employment skills
- opportunities for post-secondary courses, career training and apprenticeship

Throughout the consultation process, participants indicated that a flexible definition was necessary to allow adult learning centres to develop mandates responsive to diverse community needs, including the needs of under-age or non-adult learners. Literacy was identified as an important centre function.

Feedback from the consultation sessions indicated that adult learning centres require a flexible funding format. Participants also suggested that the model for the allocation of provincial funds to support training and skill development opportunities should be distinct from the Kindergarten to Senior 4 entitlement. Pockets of support for the current per pupil funding were also expressed. In addition, participants identified the need

for funding to support appropriate professional development programs and offerings to allow instructors to enhance their skills and capacities in the area of adult learning.

Participants emphasized that successful learner outcomes needed to be defined in a variety of ways including:

- moving from unemployment or under-employment to positive and stable employment
- enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence
- course completions
- improved literacy and critical thinking skills
- transition to post-secondary institutions
- high school completion
- enhanced life skills
- work credentials

Participants also indicated that both qualitative and quantitative definitions and measures of success needed to be used for accountability purposes. In addition, accountability measures were not to divert excessive time and energy away from the primary mandate of supporting learning.

The consultation sessions re-affirmed the need for and value of learning opportunities that provide adults with relevant, recognized and real skills and credentials. The policy points addressed in this paper are attentive to these concerns in the development of an articulated and coherent adult learning system.

DEFINITION OF AN ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Common to all adult learning centres is an adult programming stream that offers Senior 1 to Senior 4 credit courses and opportunities for high school completion, particularly in the form of a mature student diploma. Centre programs are informed by principles of adult learning. Key principles of adult learning can be found in *The Accountability Framework for Adult Learning Centres* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth 2001) that will be made available to adult learning centres and high schools serving adult learners.

To respond to individual and community learning needs, partnerships are seen to be a vital component of adult learning centres. Various forms of partnership have been developed and nurtured with and among school divisions, post-secondary institutions, local health authorities and businesses, community groups and various government agencies and

departments. Such partnerships are seen to contribute to a wholistic view of learning and enhance opportunities and outcomes for learners. Partnerships are also seen to help take advantage of practical assistance, financial sponsorship, existing infrastructures and resources across several policy areas. Each community is considered to be in the best position to develop partnerships that support their own adult learning centres.

The value and emphasis on lifelong learning, community-based needs and partnerships were used to establish the following formal definition of an adult learning centre:

> ***An adult learning centre is a community partnership organized to provide adult learners with opportunities to develop life, literacy and employment skills, enhance their academic qualifications and engage in life-long learning.***

Such a definition allows adult learning centres the flexibility to develop their mandates, partnerships, core programs and support services in ways that best meet the needs of the learners and communities they serve.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth encourages adult learning centres to develop comprehensive mandates that best address individual and community needs. A number of factors that strengthen learning opportunities and outcomes for adults, however, falls outside of the mandate of the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch. Funding to support adult learning may also be accessed from various provincial and federal government departments and community agencies.

The Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch will fund only programming that leads toward the attainment of Senior 1 to Senior 4 credits, including related literacy and tutorial supports to attain these credits, and high school completion.

- ***Target Population***

Adult learning centres should serve learners 19 years or older and out of school. Learners who have been under-served by the educational system are expected to be a primary target group. The department encourages adult learning centres to serve adult learners of all ages. **General or personal interest courses, however, will not be funded by the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch.**

- ***Learners Under Nineteen Years of Age***

Given differential learning needs, non-adults or students under the age of 19 are for the most part best accommodated by the local school division, as is the present requirement under the Public Schools Act. At the same time, there are circumstances, particularly in the absence of alternative senior years programming when the needs and responsibilities of students under the age of 19 may be better met at an adult learning centre. In such cases, student enrolment at the centre should be negotiated between the high school and the adult learning centre according to a locally developed protocol. Enrolment of underage students at the centre should not exceed 20% of the centre's full time equivalent enrolment. In addition, funding for learners under the age of 19 should move from the high school to the adult learning centre. Learners under the age of 19 are expected to complete the regular 28-credit high school diploma.

Learners under the age of 19 who attend adult learning centres will not be funded by the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch. Where adult learning centres anticipate serving under-age learners, they have the responsibility to conduct child abuse registry and criminal record checks on centre staff.

- ***Partnerships***

Partnerships between adult learning centres and school divisions, post-secondary institutions, literacy organizations, various provincial and government departments and community agencies can help expand the range of programs and services available to learners and provide them with the credits and credentials they seek. **Partnerships between adult learning centres, school divisions and post-secondary institutions can provide students with dual credits toward high school completion and post-secondary education.**

In situations where an adult learning centre seeks to establish a new partnership arrangement with a school division, the school division, in which the adult learning centre intends to operate, retains first right of refusal to participate in that partnership. Should the local school division decline to participate in the partnership, an adult learning centre may develop a partnership with another school division.

FLEXIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Adult learning in Manitoba is a major part of the education and training system, particularly as the province is challenged to innovate and adapt to the changing demands of the labour market and a competitive global economy. Given escalating demands for programs and services, not only for adult learners but for all learners, a flexible and sustainable program-based funding format is essential.

- ***Funding Format***

Funding for adult learners related specifically to the mandate of the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch will be provided in response to a written program proposal.

High schools serving adult learners will continue to receive funding through the Schools Finance Branch.

Programs that were identified as adult learning centres in the 2000–2001 academic year will not be funded as regular school programs in 2001–2002 without departmental approval. In the coming year, the department plans to review funding of adult learners in high schools to ensure policy congruence between high schools and adult learning centres.

- ***Submission Timelines and Adjudication Process***

For the 2001–02 academic year, program submissions based on a one or multi-year *plan* are to be submitted to the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch by March 30, 2001. Recommendations for program funding will be determined by an adjudication committee, comprised of practitioners, department staff and representatives of the adult learning community. Adult learning centres will be notified of their funding by May 15, 2001. Funding will be provided to centres on a quarterly basis.

Initially, funding commitments will be made on an annual basis with the intent to move to multi-year funding, pending the development of satisfactory administrative, educational and financial accountability measures and strong program designs and community linkages.

Funding is available for not-for-profit institutions only, including school divisions, funded independent schools, community colleges, adult learning centres, and community organizations. Organizations who receive funding for this program from the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch cannot charge tuition fees without prior written departmental approval. In addition, organizations are responsible for ensuring fiscal responsibility in the allocation and use of funding for adult learning. **Profit-based educational companies are not eligible for funding.**

The application process and guidelines are outlined in the *Funding Application Package* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2001), available from the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch as of January 31, 2001.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Partners in the education and training system share responsibility for ensuring that all learners benefit from their learning experiences and reach their desired outcomes as quickly and as effectively as possible. Partners are also accountable for the responsible delivery of programs and services and the use of resources. Consideration of successful community and learner outcomes in planning, programming, service delivery and information sharing helps to improve learning opportunities and the success of the transition process.

- ***Roles and Responsibilities***

In partnerships between adult learning centres and school divisions where senior years credits and opportunities for high school completion are offered, school divisions are currently responsible for:

- ensuring that students enrolled in credit courses and high school completion are registered at a senior years school in the school division and assigning the principal of this school the responsibility for approving the programming offered to these students.
- ensuring that senior years courses offered at the learning centres are taught by certified teachers.
- verifying the courses, as to the level, content and instructional approach.

Where a school division is employing teachers in an adult learning centre, these teachers are to be part of that school division's collective agreement.

In such partnerships, adult learning centres are responsible for:

- designing, delivering and monitoring appropriate and effective programs and services
- monitoring attendance
- program evaluation
- planning for improvement

As policy evolves in the development of new administrative relationships between adult learning centres and colleges, the roles and responsibilities of each of these partners will be articulated.

- ***Criteria and Responsibility for Success***

Adult learning centres and high schools serving adult learners seek to be successful in many ways. This success will be largely reflected in the extent to which centres and high schools have achieved the outcomes that they have established for the communities and the learners they serve. Outcomes may include enhanced life skills, high school completion, transition to post-secondary institutions and work credentials.

Consequently, given the needs of their learners, adult learning centres and high schools serving adult learners are responsible for setting and achieving high, yet realistic outcomes. At the same time, these outcomes should reflect the primary mandate of education and training, that is, to provide learners with the knowledge, skills, competencies and credentials that allow them to reach their goals.

- ***Annual Improvement Plans***

Beginning in the fall of 2002, adult learning centres are expected to provide the Community Learning and Youth Programs Branch with an improvement plan based on the previous year's programming. Based on data collected by the centres, the plan would highlight the extent to which the centre achieved stated goals, strengths, and shortcomings of the programs, and areas and strategies for improvement.

The *Good Practice Guide on Adult Learning Centres* outlines guidelines for developing annual improvement plans. It can assist centres and high schools to evaluate the success of their programs for adult learners and develop improvement plans.

MOVING FORWARD

Over the next year, the department will monitor and review the policy on adult learning centres to determine whether it helps to guide and support the development of an articulated and coherent adult learning system.

New working arrangements between adult learning centres and community colleges will also continue to be explored. Results from a Brandon pilot project will help to guide the development of new administrative relationships. Working with its partners, the department will continue to enhance opportunities for adult learners to earn dual post-secondary and senior years credits and maximize portability and mobility. Adult learning centres will serve as key components in an integrated Manitoba adult learning system.